

TALKING POINTS

I am pleased to welcome you here this afternoon to honor a man who has been in the forefront of the process of writing National Estimates for more years than he probably cares to remember. Hal Ford has served in virtually all phases of the Intelligence process both as a collector overseas and an analyst back home. He found his true niche, however, in seeking that bottom line of the whole intelligence process -- just what does it all mean -- in specific and brief terms -- to the policymaker. Hal has probably brought the finest editorial eye to the estimative process of any one since its inception. He is tireless -- some have even said tiresome -- in his search for the best and sharpest way to deliver important intelligence judgments to the busy executive.

- Its great to be smart, and its even better to be right, but its best of all to be read, and that's what Hal Ford insists upon for his product. He has never flinched from drawing stark judgments where necessary about major developments anywhere in the world. While his greatest love is probably the inscrutability of East Asia, he is at home with policy questions anywhere on the globe. He consistently poses challenging questions to the specialist in an effort to insure soundness of judgment.

Above all else, Hal Ford has insisted on what he calls the "so what" of National Estimates. While this question can often be overlooked by so many of us who are caught up in a given problem, the "so-what" question insures that the estimative process is truly relevant and meaningful.

Although some might accuse Hal Ford of seeking to bask in the praise of his many admirers by retiring not once, or even twice, but three times from the CIA, his return to work has always been driven by a passion for involvement in seeking the bottom line of political events. I therefore hesitate to say that you won't have Hal Ford to kick around any more. Indeed, his talents will not be lost entirely to the Agency, but will be devoted to work on the Historical Staff for sometime to come. I know you share with me an immense admiration and great personal fondness for this distinguished intelligence officer. It gives me the greatest pleasure to award him the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal and to extend our best wishes to him for the years ahead.